

Issues of Autorickshaw Commuters in Aurangabad City: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

India will supersede China in size of population by 2050 that signals very many problems. One such problem is the challenge of migration of rural population to cities and towns, leading to expansion of city fringes and establishment of neighbourhood settlements or suburban areas. As already being experienced by such population is growing distance between residential place and work place. Other things remaining the same, it in turn is increasing the demand for public transit many folds. In Aurangabad city two most popular modes of transport are autorickshaws and Ape- both are three wheelers. However, this sector, particularly, autorickshaw, is marred with many problems like in other cities of the nation. Though most popular, the auto drivers and passengers are involved in love-hate relationship. In this tug of war the most eloquent and vehemently reacting party is auto passengers. It has all the support from traffic police to RTO and the media. The objective of this small empirical study is an effort to understand 'the views of commuters about the drivers and the services they provide, in the city of Aurangabad. It came to the light that if the complaints of passengers are not unfounded. However, they also failed to realise that auto drivers are also working for wage or income. One thing emerged from the survey of city commuters what they want the cheapest mode of transit, whether it is provided with legal nuances or not.

Keywords: Auto rickshaw, significance, Commuters' issues, informality.

INTRODUCTION

The Autorickshaw sector has been plagued by controversies in metropolitan cities of India like Delhi, Bangaluru, Chennai, Ahmadabad, Chandigarh and Mumbai. Autorickshaw drivers and passengers using this transit vehicle have been at loggerheads with

each other for a long time. On the one hand gnawing petrol and CNG prices eat profits of owners/drivers, on the other; passengers need a dependable and inexpensive public transit system, on a routine basis. Increase in population, growing urbanization and migration of rural people to cities are the basic problems that are putting tremendous pressure on cities'

infrastructure. The ever increasing demand for public transit coupled with the non-availability of MSRTC intra city bus service make things very difficult for common man in Aurangabad. Besides apathy of law enforcement and policy making agencies is aggravating situation.

Several auto drivers are unionised, have gone on strikes, and even taken their war to the virtual world; there are several blogs, radio frequency, Face book accounts of autorickshaw drivers. The passengers resort to tactics like police complaints, boycott and reporting in media. Apart from it, there are groups with vested interests that are trying to make most of the situation. As a result problems persist for auto drivers as well as commuters.

Taking this situation into consideration an attempted was made to find out the ground reality. The objective of this study is to find out what do they people of Aurangabad think of autorickshaw sector? Why do the people lambaste auto drivers, yet have to board an auto? Are they caught between devil and deep sea? For this purpose a limited survey was carried out in the city of Aurangabad.

Aurangabad District is administrative headquarter of Marathwada region (Aurangabad Division) of the Maharashtra State. It is located in 19 and 20 degrees North Longitudes and 74 to 76 degrees East Latitude, with an area of 10100 sq. km¹ and emerging metropolis area is 300 km² (100 sq mi)². Its total population as per 2011 Census is 3695928³, and population of emerging metro is 1189376⁴. The city of Aurangabad is historically rich and has several monuments in and around including Ajanta and Ellora caves which enjoy status of the World Heritage Sites,

declared by the UNESCO⁵. Aurangabad was declared 'Tourism Capital of Maharashtra'⁶ by State Tourism Minister in 2011.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research paper is to look into the minds of various types of commuters in Aurangabad who use this vehicle on routine basis and what they think of burning issues affecting autorickshaw sector. The survey also compares various aspects of the services provided by different modes of transit available to the people in Aurangabad. The purpose of such a comparison is to establish that, this ubiquitous three-wheeler is the most popular among all modes.

Data Collection Method

Data collection was done primarily by interviewing the people at different rickshaw stands in the city. The sampling method chosen was 'purposive sampling' with a sample size of 60 respondents from within the city limits. However, three respondents were non-residents, one was a Pune resident, second came from Ambejogai and third from Nagpur, both was studying in Aurangabad. The respondents were those who were ready to spare time and could answer as many questions as was possible for them. In few cases visits were made to respondents' place of residences i.e. the Women's Hostel of Dr. B.A. Marathwada University, Aurangabad. Data hence, collected was tabulated. Simple average and percentage were computed for analysis and interpretation. Secondary data/information was collected through various web sites.

¹. Socio Economic Statistical Abstract- District Aurangabad, Directorate of Statistic, Maharashtra, 2010-11.

²Quoted by: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurangabad,_Maharashtra

³.Table_1_PR_Districts_TRU-http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/prov_results_paper2_indiavol2.html

⁴.Table_3_UA_Cities_Lakh_and_Above- hyper link

http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/prov_results_paper2_indiavol2.html

⁵. Wikipedia free encyclopedia hyper link <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurangabad,_Maharashtra>

⁶Syed Rizwanullah in Times of India, Pune edtn. Likn:< <http://lite.epaper.timesofindia.com/...=&publabel=TOI>>

Survey Design

The questionnaire was taken from similar survey conducted in Chennai⁷ and Bangaluru. One more study on three-wheelers in Sri Lanka also has similar approach.⁸ Both studies have included auto rickshaw passengers' views along with survey of auto drivers. Both the questionnaires are similar because of the objective of survey, with similar interpretations. However, here only the demand side of analysis is undertaken. The questionnaire in this study does not have the entire questionnaire; some of the questions were omitted. The questions are close ended with additional option of 'specify', or 'any other' so that respondents could be able to express their views aptly.

Limitation: This survey is limited only to know the views of passengers. However, interviews and talks with the union leaders, members and other auto drivers were used to arrive at the full picture. The inferences are limited to the people's views about auto service and researcher understands of these issues in Aurangabad.

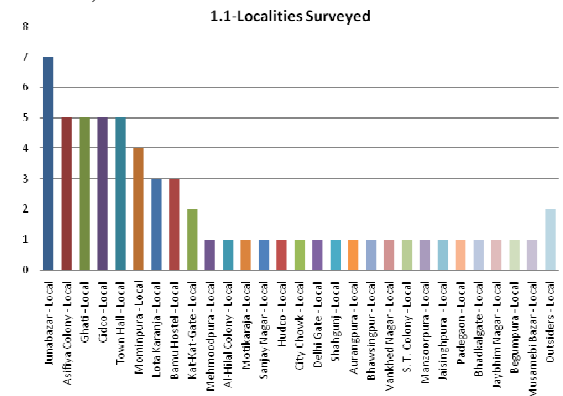
INTERPRETATION OF DATA

I. Respondents' Profile

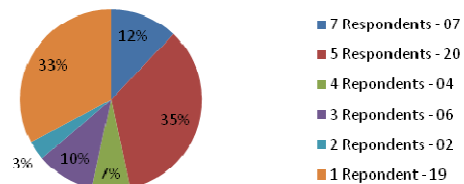
a. Locality Spread of Respondents

The respondents are spread over 28 localities of the city. The largest number of respondents i.e., 7 were found in Juna Bazar locality, 5 respondents each in 4 localities, 4 respondents each in 2 localities, 3 respondents in 1 locality, 2 respondents in 1 locality and finally 1 respondent each from 19 different localities. This shows the distribution of sample. The 4 respondents shown in BAMU Hostel are in fact non-residents; they came from

neighbouring districts, like Ambejogai of district Osmanabad, Partur of district Jalna, and as far as from Nagpur and Pune, for educational pursuits and stayed at Dr. B.A. Marathwada University's girls hostel. The following charts show the representation of localities covered in the survey. It is depicted with help of following Charts, 1.1 and 1.1.2.



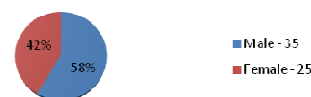
1.1.2-Per cent of Respondents in each Locality of Aurangabad City



1.2- Gender Split of Respondents

Out of the 60 respondents 58 per cent were male and 42 per cent female respondents, which is shown in the following chart.

1.2-Gender Split of Respondents

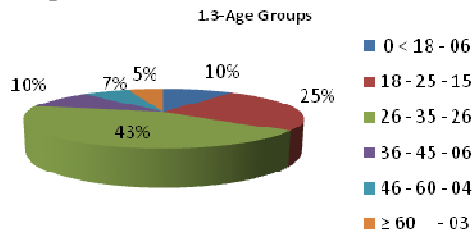


⁷**Courtesy:** Civitas Consultancies Pvt. Ltd for City Connect Foundation Chennai, *Study on the Autorickshaw Sector in Chennai*, Dec. 2010, <chennaicityconnect.com/wp-content/uploads/.../Auto-Study-Chennai.pdf>

⁸**Courtesy:** A.K. Somasundaraswaran,; *RESULTS OF SURVEYS AMONG DRIVERS AND CUSTOMERS OF FOR-HIRE THREE-WHEELERS IN FIVE SMALL TOWNS IN SRI LANKA*, Asia-Pacific Development Journal, Vol. 15, No. 1, June 2008. **Link** <www.unescap.org/pdd/publications/apdj.../6_Somasundaraswaran.pdf>

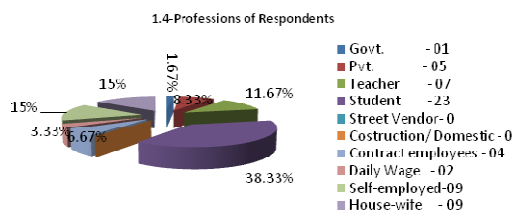
1.3- Age Distribution

Age distribution was spread over 6 groups as shown in the pie chart given below. The largest percent of respondents belonged to age group between 26-35 which accounts for 43 per cent of sample, followed by age group 18-25 which is 25 per cent, age group 36-45 comes to 10 percent, age group of less than 18 also accounts for 10 per cent, age group 46-60 accounts for 7 per cent, highest age group of 60 years and above accounts for just 5 percent of total respondents.



1.4- Professional Distribution of Respondents

Respondents were grouped in 10 categories according to the type work including students, which happens to be the largest group with more than 38 per cent of the sample. This is followed by self-employed and housewives with 15 per cent each, teachers making more than 11 per cent. People from professional groups like street vendors, construction workers and domestic workers could not be interviewed due to the nature of their work. Rest is very scattered, as shown in the following chart.

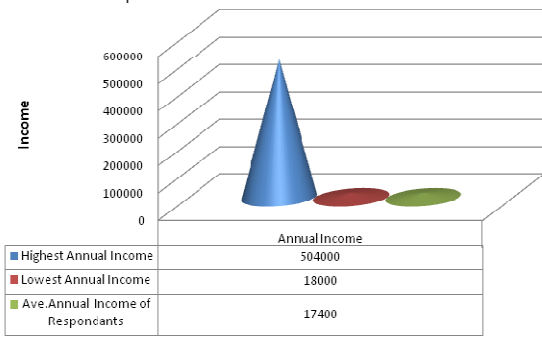


1.5- The Range of Income of Respondents

The respondents belong to ten different types of professions, including non-earning group of students and housewives. Thus the

average annual income for all 60 respondents would come to Rs. 80100; however, if the nonworking group of 32 respondents is eliminated then the average annual income of 28 earning respondents comes to Rs. 171643.

1.5- Incomes of Respondents



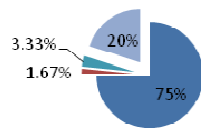
2-Characteristics of Transit Vehicles in Aurangabad City

Different types of vehicles generally used by commuters are meter autorickshaw, state run buses popularly known as ST-buses, private buses, Tata Sumo Jeeps, called as kalipeeli (Black-Yellow) Vans, and seat-auto or shared autorickshaws. Other two types of vehicles namely, call-taxi and taxi do not ply have the services. ST- buses also do not ply in the city now, however long distance services between different taluquas of Aurangabad district are available. Thus the from among the given 7 types of vehicle only 5 types are functioning. For this reason analysis and interpretation is restricted to only 5 functioning vehicles.

2.1- Accessible

The most accessible transit vehicle as per the survey turned out to be meter autorickshaw with 75 per cent of passengers confirming it, followed by shared-autorickshaw with 20 per cent respondent voting for it; 3 per cent and just 1 per cent of respondents said vans(Maruti) and buses are accessible, which is shown in the following chart.

2.1-Accessibility of Vehicles



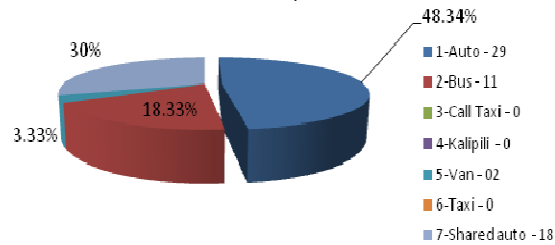
The autorickshaws or three wheelers are of two types, one is three seater Bajaj auto and the other is Piaggio Ape a six seater. The first one offer mixed type of service, one can go by metered fare or can share with others and pay according to rates which are set and followed by most drivers. While Ape is a para-transit vehicle made for six passengers, however drivers accommodate 8-10 passengers per trip. Autos are three seaters and can be used as share taxi; the drivers take more than three in order to maximise profit per trip. There is no known restriction or rule not to pool or share a vehicle, taking passengers more than its capacity is certainly restricted practice. It has been observed the auto drivers take up to seven passengers in one auto. The arrangement is; four passengers' behind and two people sharing seat with driver. All sit in an alternate position. If one person sits at the right hand side door occupying the back portion of seat, next should occupy only front portion of seat, third back portion and forth front portion. In the front, driver perches on the front portion to accommodate one person each on both the sides, facing east and west respectively. At policed cross roads driver asks the front extras to get down and board again after driving past the traffic police. Ape has four seats behind drivers and two seats in the rear. However in the rear four or five are packed, with driver again having his seat shred by two more. This is the most economical use of any vehicle anywhere by both, driver as well as passengers. The six seater Ape autorickshaws are few as compared to three seaters.

2.2- Affordability

As far as affordability of vehicle is concerned, respondents are clear; with more

going with metered auto i.e. 48 per cent, followed by 30 per cent for shared auto, 18 per cent chose state transport buses, 3 per cent showed they could afford a van it is shown in the following chart.

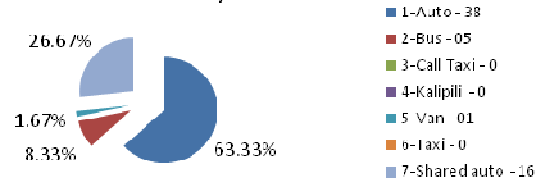
2.2-Affordability of Vehicles



2.3 - Availability

More than 63 per cent of respondent said meter auto and 27 percent said shared autos are most available vehicle as compared with other modes like consider buses 8 per cent and van 1 per cent.

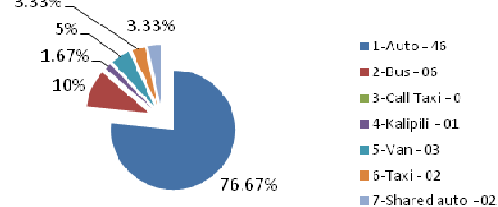
2.3-Availability of Vehicles



2.4-Most Comfortable

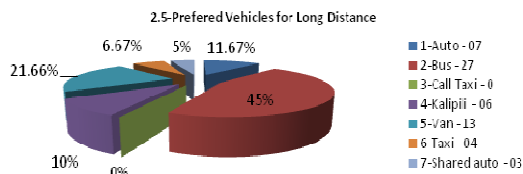
In case of comfortable transit, as shown in the Chart2.d, again auto was chosen as the most comfortable vehicle by more than 76 per cent of respondents, 10 per cent said buses are comfortable, 5 per cent said van is comfortable, 3 per cent shared auto and taxi respectively and 1 per cent kalipeeli. In this characteristic also meter autorickshaw is the clear choice.

2.4-Comfortable Vehicles



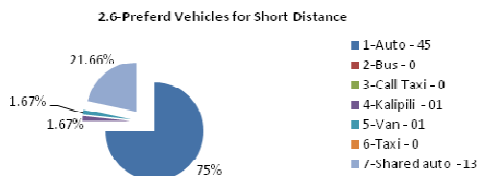
2.5- Good for Long Distance

For this characteristic there is considerable scatter as depicted in the Chart2.e; 45 percent said buses, more than 21 per cent said van was good for long distance travel. 11 per cent said meter auto and more than 6 per cent said taxi, shared auto was consider good for long distance by 5 per cent. Here maximum number of passengers chose bus over auto.



2.6- Good for Short Distance

Metered auto with 75 per cent and shared auto with 22 per cent are the clear choices of the respondents as shown in the following Chart2.f. Reaming 3 per cent thought that kalipeeli and van are good for short distance.



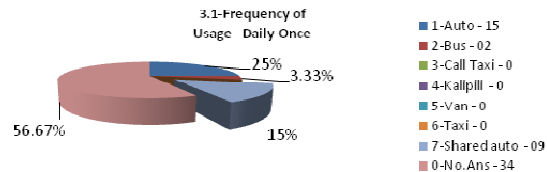
3. FREQUENCY OF USAGE

This indicator shows how many times a day and week a particular vehicle was used by the respondents. Concentration of passenger shows the significance of a particular mode of transit.

3.1-Daily Once

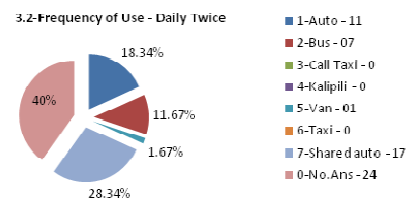
The number of respondents who used metered auto is more than 56 per cent of the total respondents, 25 percent did not answer; it is the group of 15 housewives from 60 respondents. They clarified that they did not travel every day and might not require any type

of transport even if did. 15 per cent of respondents used shared auto and 2 per cent used buses for single trips. The detailed are shown in the following chart.



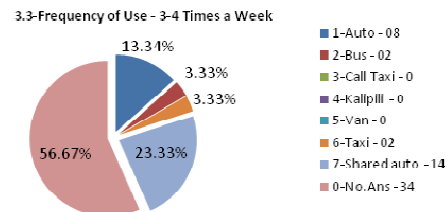
3.2- Daily twice

For a twice daily trip to-and-from to Office College or work place, more than 28 per cent of respondents used shared auto, 18 percent used metered auto, more than 11 per cent used bus, 1.67 (one individual) used a van and considerably large 40 per cent did not answer, means that either they did not use any of the given vehicle, or had other options like pick-up and drop-down by family members, 15 remaining respondents were non-working housewives.



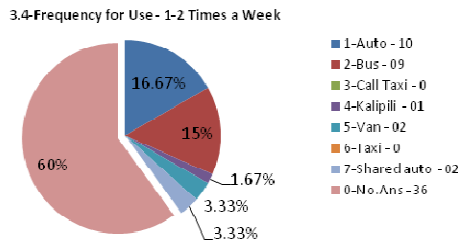
2.3- Three to Four Times a Week

When asked about the type of vehicle they used two to three times a week, 23 percent answered shared auto, 13 per cent metered auto; 3 per cent each used bus and taxi and more than 56 per cent did not answer.



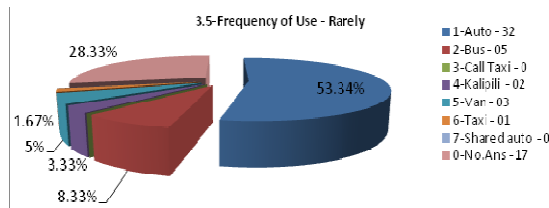
2.4- One to Two Times a Week

A maximum of more than 16 per cent used metered auto, 15 per cent bus, 3 per cent each shared auto and van, and 60 per cent did not answer.



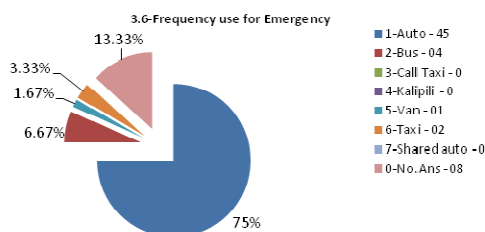
2.5- Rarely

53 per cent of respondents answered that they used metered auto in rare situations, 8 per cent used bus, 5 per cent van, 3 per cent kalipeeli, 1 person taxi and 28. Per cent did not reply.



2.5- Emergency

The preferred vehicle in emergency was again metered auto, 75 per cent respondent depended on it next comes bus with more than 6 per cent followed by taxi with 3 dependability and 1 person chose van for emergency use, nobody needed shared auto in emergency for the obvious nature of service, further a group of 13 per cent did not answer.

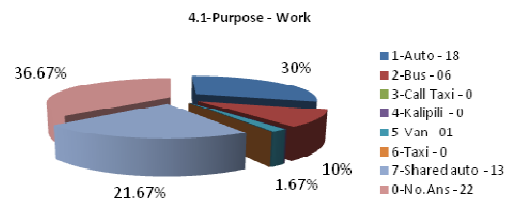


4. PURPOSE OF USING A VEHICLE

The respondent were asked to name they used for different purpose like, work, education shopping, health and recreation and other purposes not listed the response collected is as follows.

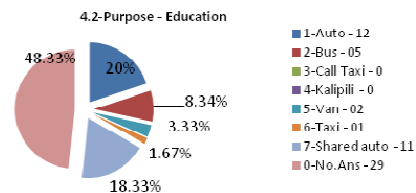
4.1-Work

30 per cent used metered autos, 21 per cent shared auto, 10 per cent bus for going to workplace; more than 36 per cent did not reply.



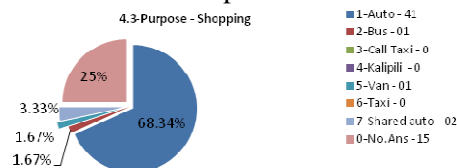
4.2- Education

20 per cent of respondent used metered, 18 per cent used shared auto, for educational purpose 8 per cent used bus, 3 per cent van and one individual used taxi for educational purpose. 29 per cent respondent did give no answer.



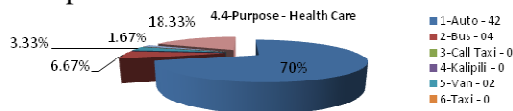
4.3- Shopping

For shopping 68 per cent of the sample preferred shared auto, and merely 3 per cent used shared auto, one individual used bus and one more used van. 25 per cent did not answer.



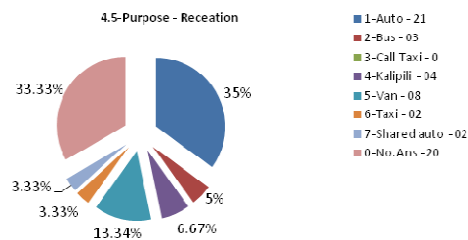
4.4-Health Care

For the healthcare purposes, 70 per cent respondent chose metered auto, more than 6 per cent used shared auto, one individual preferred bus, one more individual used van per cent van and 18 per cent did not answer.



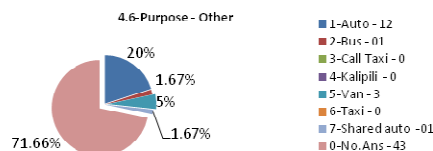
4.5 –Recreation

For recreation and entertainment also metered auto was preferred vehicle of 35 per cent of respondents, followed by 13 percent using van, more than 6 per cent used kalipeeli 5 per cent using bus, and 3 per cent each used taxi and shared auto. 33 per cent did not answer.



4.6- Other Purpose

For query of other purposes for which a particular vehicle was used by respondents, 20 per cent replied that they preferred metered auto, 5 per cent chose van, one individual chose bus and the other shared auto, remaining 71 per cent did not answer it.

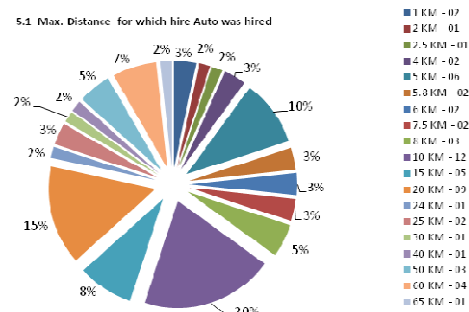


5. DISTANCE AND FARE

The views of respondents on distance for which they hired auto rickshaw shows considerable scatter; 35 per cent of respondents

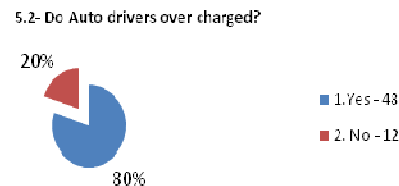
said they hired auto for a distance of 5-8km, 32 per cent said 3-5 km, 13 per cent for 8-10 km, 5 per cent for 1-3 km, 3 per cent for 10-15, and only one for more than 15 km, 10 percent of people did not answer.

5.1- Distance for Which Auto Rickshaw was Hired



5.2- Overcharging

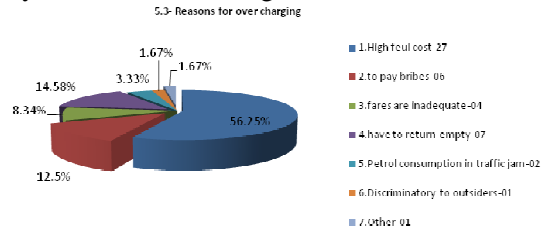
A huge 80 per cent of respondents replied that auto drivers did overcharge them as against 20 per cent who said no, it is shown in the following Chart.



5.3- Reasons for Overcharging

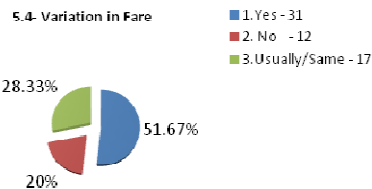
When asked, reasons of overcharging, the respondents explained their views in the following manner. Out of 60 respondents, 80 per cent said auto drivers over charge. Among the reasons for overcharging 56 per cent were of view that it was due to high fuel cost, 14 per cent said the drivers have to return empty while petrol is consumed, 12 per cent said they paid bribes (hand outs) to the police, 8 per cent said auto fares are inadequate, 4 per cent said due to petrol consumption in traffic jams 2, percent

said they are discriminatory to outsiders and tourists, further 2 per cent said they do require any reason to overcharge.



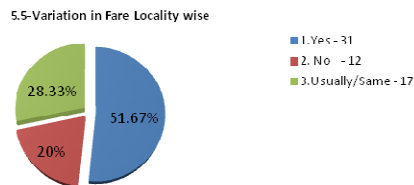
5.4- Variation in Fares

Not only overcharging, auto drivers resorted to price discrimination also, more than 51 per cent opined that they charged different fares in different areas, 17 per cent said they usually charged the same fare, 20 per cent auto driver did not charge discriminatory fares in different areas.



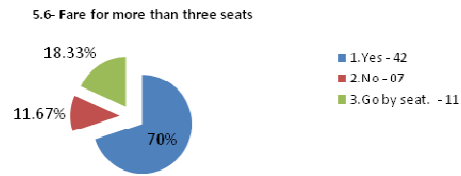
5.5- Different Fares in different Localities

To the question whether fares are higher in your locality as compared with other; 60 per cent lower and 40 per cent said higher.



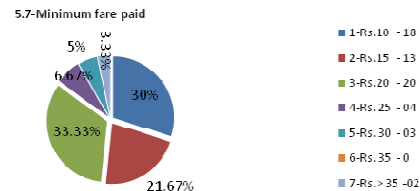
5.6- Fare for more than Three Seats

When the passengers are more than 3, auto drivers charge extra for extra seat, it was the opinion of 70 per cent of respondents, 18 per cent said, if more than 3 they anyway go by per seat fare. However, 11 per cent said auto drivers did not charge extra for the fourth seat.



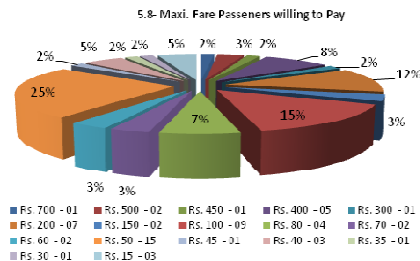
5.7- Minimum Fare

An amount of Rs.20 was paid by 33 per cent of respondents, Rs.10 by 30 per cent, Rs.15 by more than 21 per cent of respondents. More than 6 per cent paid Rs.25 and 5 per cent paid Rs.30 and lastly 3 per cent said they paid Rs.35 as minimum fare.



5.8- Maximum Fare

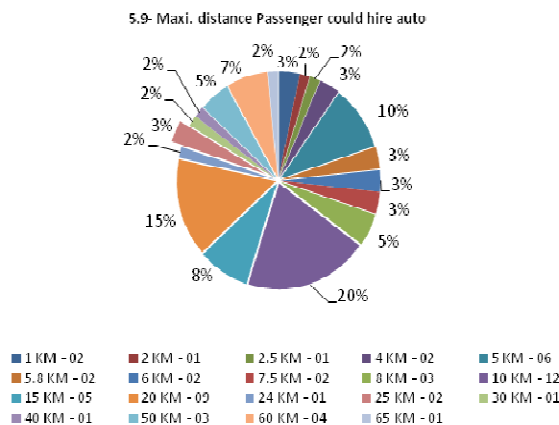
As far as the maximum fare was concerned, the respondents were not clear about it, as a result a range of fare from the highest of Rs.700 to the lowest of Rs.15, was given. The scatter is shown in following chart. The Maximum of 15 per cent respondent said they would pay maximum fare of Rs.100; 13 per cent said Rs.50 and 12 per cent said Rs.200.



5.9-Maximum Distance

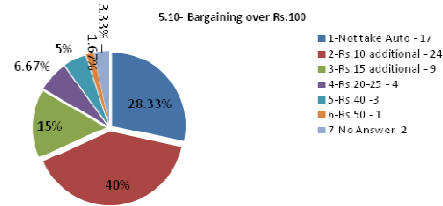
The respondents' views are very much scattered on maximum distance for which they hired auto. From a minimum of 1 km to a

maximum of 65 km; 20 per cent said 10km, 15 per cent said 20km, 10 per cent for 5 km, 8 per cent for 15km, more than 6 per cent said 60km, 5 per cent said they hired auto rickshaw for the maximum distance of 50km and another 5 per cent said it is for 5km. These figures show how wide is the range of auto rickshaws to meet the needs of commuters in this city.



5.10-Bargaining

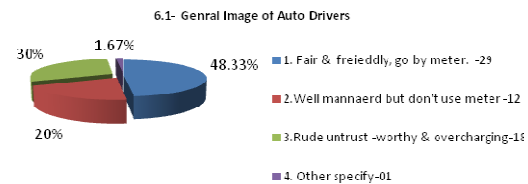
In order to ascertain the bargaining power of the auto commuters; respondents were asked how would they bargain if the driver demanded Rs. 100 for a particular distance and time. They gave following reaction; 40 per cent said they would pay Rs. 10 more in addition to the meter fare, 28 per cent said they would not hire auto, 15 per cent said additional Rs.15, more than 6 per cent said additional Rs.20 to Rs.25; 5 per cent said Rs.40; 3 per cent said they would pay Rs.80; one individual said he would pay Rs.50/-. The power of bargaining depends on two things, distance and the time. In case of long distance and odd time it is the driver who would command the fare and in case of short distance and day time, commuters would be able to bargain a reasonable fare acceptable to both. It also shows how significant are auto rickshaws for routine transit in the city.



6. IMAGE OF AUTORICKSHAW DRIVERS

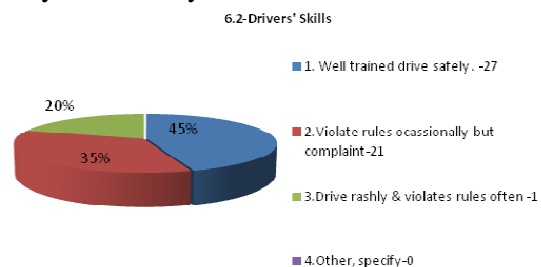
6.1- General Image

The respondents have three different images of auto drivers 48 per cent said they were fair, friendly and go by meter, second group of 30 per cent said they were rude, untrustworthy and overcharging third group said they were well mannered but did not used meter.



6.2. Driving Skills

Out of 60 respondents, 45 per cent said the drivers were well trained ad drive safely, 35 per cent said they violated rules occasionally but were mostly compliant and 20 per cent said they drive rashly and violated rule often.



6.3- Traffic Jams

A huge 65 per cent said auto rickshaws were responsible for traffic jams on the city roads; the reason cited for traffic jams was that they were too many in numbers. The remaining 35 per cent said they were not responsible for traffic jams.

6.3- Autos and Traffic Jams



6.4- Accidents

A share of 55 per cent respondents thought autos did account more for most of the accidents on the city roads; rest 45 per cent thought they were responsible.

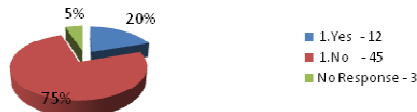
6.4-Autos and Accidents



6.5- Passengers Demand for Fast Driving

To the query, whether passengers ask auto drivers go fast, in hurry, even if a rule was being flouted; 75 per cent said no, 20 per cent said yes and 5 per cent did not answer.

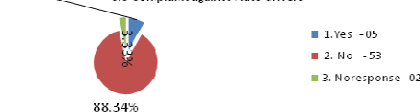
6.5- High speed on Demand



6.6- Complaint against Auto Drivers

88 per cent of the respondent said they never filed any complaint against autorickshaw drivers, 8 per cent said they did file police complaint and the res 3 per cent did not answer.

6.6-Complaint against Auto drivers

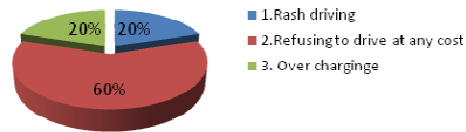


6.7-Reasons for Filing Complaint

Out of those 5 respondents, 3 individuals (60 per cent) complaints were for refusing to drive them at any cost, one individual for, rash driving and one for

overcharging. Only 2 respondents' (40 per cent) complaints were answered.

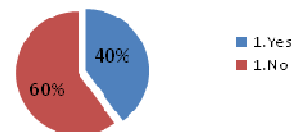
6.7- Reasons for Filing Complaints



6.8- Action Taken on Complaints

Out of five passengers who said they had filed complaints against erring auto drivers, only 2 passengers or 40 per cent were contacted by the traffic police rest i.e., 3 passengers or 60 per cent never came to know what happened to their complaints.

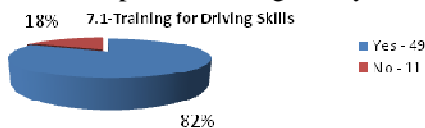
6.8- Action taken on Complaints



7. NEED FOR TRAINING OF AUTO DRIVERS

7.1-Driving Skills

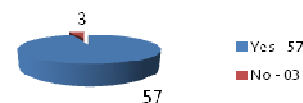
More than 81 per cent of respondents thought auto drivers needed training in driving skills, while 18 per cent thought they did not.



7.2- Communication Skills

A huge chunk of 95 per cent of respondents thought auto drivers should be provided with training in communication skills, and 5 per cent said no.

7.2 Training for Communication Skills



7.3- Grooming

Training auto drivers for grooming was required was the opinion of 80 per cent respondents and 20 per cent said that is not necessary.

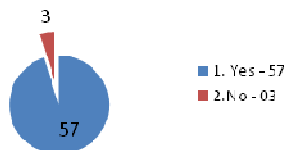
7.3-Training for Grooming



7.4- Training for Good Behaviour with Costumer

An overwhelming 95 per cent said they require training appropriate behaviour with their costumers, only 5 per cent said no.

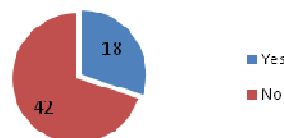
7.4-Training for-Behaviour with Customer



7.4- Are passengers generally harsh with passengers?

To this question 70 per cent of respondent said no and 30 per cent said that passengers are generally harsh with auto drivers.

7.4-Are Passengers harsh with A' Drivers?

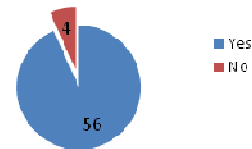


8. VIEWS ON CORRUPTION

8.1- RTO and TP

93 per cent of respondents said, corrupt officials at Regional Transport Office, Aurangabad, were responsible for pathetic condition and around 7 per cent said they were not.

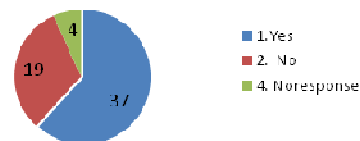
8.1-RTO/TP responsible for pathetic condition



8.2 Nexus between TP and Auto Drivers

On the nexus between driver and traffic police, more than 61 per cent of respondents said yes, more than 31 per cent said no and around 7 percent did not respond.

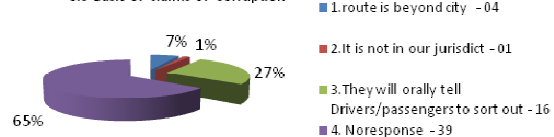
8.2-Nexus between A' Drivers and RTO/TP



8.3- Indication of Corrupt Nexus

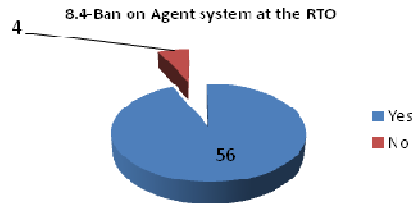
The respondents were given three options to choose from; around 26 per cent chose third option which is, the traffic police would orally driver and passengers both to come to an agreement in front of him, however, at destination driver demands more and usually gets it, around 7 per cent said the route was beyond city limits, 1 person said traffic police would say the area was not in their jurisdiction. However, a whopping 65 per cent did choose any of the three options.

8.3-Basis of claims of Corruption



8.4- Agent System

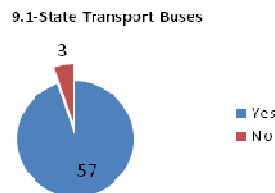
93 per cent of respondent thought that the agents that are always present in substantial numbers, in RTO 's Office should be banned around 7 per cent thought they should not be banned.



9. CHANGES THAT PASSENGERS WANT

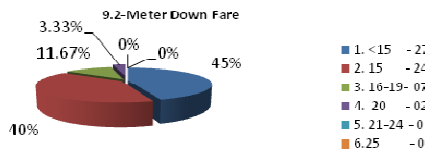
9.1- ST Buses

State Transport buses, which are popularly called ST buses should resume its services with the city was the opinion of 95 per cent and of 5 per cent said no to this question.



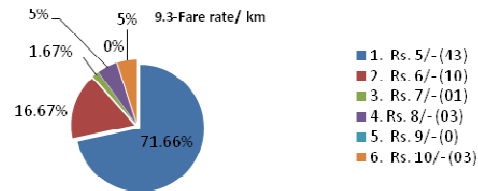
9.2- Meter down Fare

The respondents answered to only four out of given six options, which are as follows; 45 per cent answered that it should be less than Rs.15, 40 per cent said it should be Rs.15, more than 11 per cent said it should be between Rs. 16-19, only 3 per cent said it should be Rs 20.



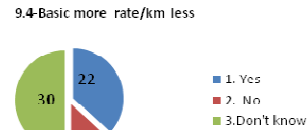
9.3- Fare Rate per Kilo Meter

Here respondents were scattered, a maximum of around 72 per cent said per kilometer rate should be Rs.5, around 7 per cent said Rs.6, 5 per cent said Rs. 8, another 5 per cent said it should be Rs.10 per km. one individual said it should be Rs. 8.



9.4- Meter down more and Rate per Km. Less

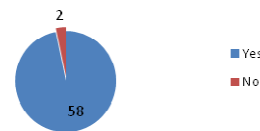
It was asked the respondent what would you think if meter down fare was more so that the driver covers cost of fuel and rate per kilo meter thereafter was less; 50 per cent replied they did not know, 36.67 said yes and 13 said no to such arrangement.



9.5-Use of Meter

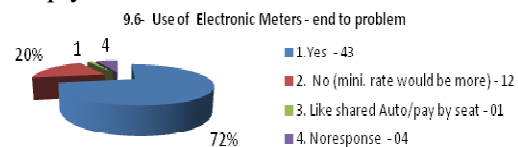
An overwhelming 97 per cent said yes to the question that, if driver offered you to use meter, only 3 per cent said no.

9.5-Driver insists on using meter would Passengers agree?



9.6-Electronic Meter

More than 71 per cent of respondents said that if auto drivers used electronic meters then the problems of passengers would be resolved, 20 per cent thought no because they feared that minimum or meter down fare would be increased, one individual said he would prefer shared auto, and more than 6 per cent did not reply.



10. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

From above analysis it is clear that autorickshaw is the most used vehicle in the city. People of different ages, different professions and from students to housewives used this three-wheeler. In the views of passengers it was the most accessible, affordable, available and comfortable vehicle. It was considered as good for short as well as long distances, as compared to other vehicles, even personal vehicles in some places.

Either shared auto or metered auto; it was used most frequently for a wide range of purposes—from work to education, health care, shopping, recreation and other purposes. It is the clear choice of people in Aurangabad, as it is for many metropolitan cities and emerging town- neighbours in the rest of the nation. The significant role played by auto sector was also emphasized in report by the EMBARC, which is a global think tank on environmentally and financially sustainable urban transport.⁹ This dependability comes from the very design of autorickshaw. It is small in size and can be maneuvered easily in by- lanes of the cities. It also provides first and last mile connectivity to other public transports; from bus stand or railway station to the final destination. Yet it is marred with problems.

The issues raised by the passengers everywhere were about refusal to go to certain destinations, tampering of mechanical meters, fleecing etc. In Mumbai the support system for passengers comes from Mumbai Grahak Panchayat, which provides countervailing power to the strong autorickshaw unions. Aurangabad does not have a union of commuters, so far, or any other support system. In fact the whole sector is unorganised and

chaotic. There were not only old but scrapped vehicles also plying in the city, during the period of survey. Such scraped vehicle was brought from Mumbai. In many cases kerosene was mixed with petrol for cutting down operating cost.

It was also found that traffic police do take hand outs from auto drivers, so do the agents at Regional Transport Office. I had posed as a prospective buyer of an auto rickshaw and contacted an agent to find out what they actually do? It was found that agents help fill up various forms for like permit, registration, license, and various certificate, for which they charge many fold more than the price and fees set by the government, around 50 per cent of what they take from illiterate and docile people is gone to RTO officers. These agents were regularized in 2003, and people are persuaded to do work through an agent, or face indefinite delays.

Besides, traffic police also have their own tactics; chaowks or cross road in market area, bus stand and railway station are manned where traffic jam occur in the city and its neighbourhoods. The TP for e.g., at Jubilee Park crossroad, hid in some corner or lane under trees and keep an eye on erring auto drivers. Instead of fining them and issuing receipts a mid way deal is done, many a times in full view of the passengers.

It is a common knowledge that the police and RTO officers and some of the cooperators have their own fleet of auto rickshaws in the city. There are more vehicles ruing without permit; about 60,000 -70,000 than the one with permits; about 30,000-40,000. Besides many permit are sold by owners at price of around Rs. 50,000/- for a period of 5 years.¹⁰

⁹Akshy Mani, Madhav Pai, Rishi Aggarwal, , Sustainable Urban Transport in India, Role of Auto Rickshaw Sector, World Resources Institute & EMBARC, www.embarq.org/.../sustainable-urban-transport-india-role-auto-ricksha

¹⁰This information was collected in an interview with an auto owner/driver who is also member of a union. When I went to the RTO, Station Road, Aurangabad, the officer refused any information, asking me whether am I a journalist. My RTI application is pending with the RTO.

The Pre paid service was started at the railway station for some time. It was stopped unceremoniously. My personal experience was that these officials were making money by taking share from the pre paid fare. Especially, if you are new in the city, or a tourist or a woman and want to go some remote areas like University Campus, after 7 pm. Some auto drivers who live on the nearby areas are told to take passenger, fare is decided with driver and conveyed to the passenger, when everything is finalized; clerk take his share advance from the driver, which is divide between him and the police. At the destination driver tries to get back the amount from passenger he had given to the clerk of per paid booth.

In an interview with Mr. Ashfaq Salami, Secretary of 'Lal Baota Rickshaw Chalak Union', -affiliated to the CPI- it was pointed out that their agitation is for regularizing the sector, eliminating corrupt practice and setting fare in such a way that would give the family of auto driver basic standard of living. Autorickshaw owners/drivers' argument is that they are the only producers, in the current setup, who are not allowed to set the price of their product; they are treated as government servants, which they are not. They are forced to wear khaki uniforms if the vehicle is on rent and whit if it is owned. Besides, while setting autorickshaw tariff the state does not consider increasing fuel prices. The Hakim Committee which was established in 1996 to fix the fare of autorickshaw, used taxi formula so far is now trying to invent a new viable auto fare. As long as it is not done they will remain sandwiched between upward pressure of rising operating cost and downward pressure of stagnating fare.

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The current meter down price is Rs.12/- for 2 km, running meter per km is 90 paise and waiting charges are Rs.9/- per hour and cost of oil plus petrol is Rs.100/- As against this situation, an Ape which consume cheaper diesel- Rs.35/- per liter, takes more than 6 seats, is more competitive. It came to the light that if the complaints of passengers are not unfounded, they refuse to see the other side of the picture; the one thing they want is the cheapest mode of transit, whether it is provide with legal nuances or not.

Adding to the woes of autorickshaw drivers is the bullying by some passengers. One person boards the auto asks driver to go to certain place, gets down at the destination, where some friends are waiting for him. The passenger get down with paying anything to driver, if agitated, driver is manhandled and forced to leave. Other example is the passenger gets down at certain place and asks the driver to wait for him until he returns; driver waits for long time in hope of getting extra money as waiting charges but passenger vanishes without paying fare. There is nothing a driver can do; he has no safeguard against such uncouth behaviour of passengers. Such types of incidences are increasing by the day.

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There are several things that need to be looked into and sorted out. For instance, the auto rickshaw stands. There are two types of stands; first the usual stand where the autos of drivers/owner queue up, with proper documents, badges, uniform and working meters. The other type of stands is called 'Gadhak Line' or donkey queue. The three seater autos and six-seater Ape usually work from such stands. They are shared autos and go by the seat fare. Such fare is calculated by the driver/owner on the basis of fuel cost, distance and chances of getting more seats on a point-to-point route, to and fro. For from Baba Petrol Pump to Chikalthana many passengers are in flux if one get down other is accommodate, and this happens for throughout the distance. In this ingenious way the driver specially, who does not own the vehicle, tries to maximise his profit at the end of the day. In case of most of auto drivers who own vehicles by loans- particularly from informal lenders- substantial portion of their income goes in paying back the loan installments.

Another tactic used to enhance earning is the number of passengers per trip. By name it is three seater transit vehicles, however, up to 6 people are stuffed in. The arrangement is: four passenger behind and two in the front with driver. The Passengers do not mind as they have to pay a pittance as fare, so they quickly settle down back and forth. The first passenger occupies left door seat, second and fourth passengers perch on the front portion of the seat, third passenger accommodates himself in the back portion. In fact the second and fourth passengers seem inserted in this arrangement. In the drivers cabin two passengers sit on both sides of driver facing opposite directions. The driver, in a precarious situation, perches himself on the edge of seat. At the cross roads manned by traffic police both the passengers in the front alight cross the road and board again after a few meters walk.

Yet another practice used in shared auto system is that the passengers have to wait as long as six passengers do not fill it up. They do so to avoid paying fare by meter, which is at least double the amount for minimum run. They understand each other's need so clearly. There is a tacit agreement between the auto drivers and passengers.

In absence of any clear policy, reliable and cheap transit system, both drivers and passengers both are facing difficulties, which have become an integral part of their routine lives.

Following solutions can be helpful in reducing the anguish of commuters and auto drivers.

1. It is a high time that the policy makers and executors wake up. De-regularisation need not end in corruption and chaos. First, thing needed to be done is of fixing rational fare rates. This should include considerations

¹¹Government of Maharashtra, *Report of the One Man Committee for the Determination of the Fare Structure of Taxis and Auto-Rickshaws in Maharashtra State*, July 2012.

like, fuel prices which frequently changes up and down. This impacts the livelihood of auto drivers more than the passengers. Thus to stabilise this impact fuel prices should be maintained at by subsidy especially for public transit system. If that cannot be done; the rise in fuel price should be reflected in the auto fare, like the fare of buses and local trains in Mumbai.

2. Share –auto system and shifting passengers system seems viable is the wake of rising price, particularly food inflation, which affects the poor more; with a few changes and conditions it can help both drivers as well as passengers; therefore should be encouraged.
3. Physical and social environment such as regular repair of roads, improvement in road safety should be emphasized. Construction of primary access road to facilitate the service to low income residential areas is also needed especially in the old city, though the master plan has been put into practice after a long wait, street connectivity has improved however, in most of the places roads are dug up and work has not started yet and are in a pathetic condition.
4. The integration of State Transport buses, autos and Ape into a unified intra city transit system; where clear demarcation of routes should be planned, in such way as to avoid congestion and collision. Three seater Auto stands should be separated from six seater Ape stands. Shuttle services between two important points on a route should be created, so that the auto and ape can co-exists instead of cut throat competition in which more often than not autos loose. The so called 'Gadhak Lanes' should be allowed to take maximum of eight passengers, and autos a maximum of four.

If the routes are separated it is a better way to help both auto-Ape drivers and commuters. For this purpose an elaborate map of the city roads is needed to finalised separate routes for ST buses, autos and ape. Separate entry of actual number of both autos and Ape should be made so vehicle population per thousand of persons can be calculated city-wise.

Right now the statistics available is for the district of Aurangabad as a whole¹². The total number of buses in the district was 6,065, as on March 2011. The increase in number of buses was 17.68 per cent over previous year. The total number of Motors & Station Wagons was 32386, and growth over previous year was 6.68 per cent. Similarly, number of Jeep owners was 18383 and growth over last year was 10.89 per cent. Taxi owners were 1970, with growth in number accounting for 5.56 per cent. The Rickshaw head includes both, three seaters and six seaters i.e., autos and Ape. Together the three wheelers were 24,665 in number with just 1.26 per cent increase over last year. The three seater autorickshaws were 23297, with 1.17 per cent increase over last year. While six seater Ape were 1368 in number and showed a little higher growth in terms of per cent, viz. 2.78. Here the number of vehicle owner means the number of permit holders.

The above in statistics shows that the number of three wheelers, i.e. auto and Ape has increased very less as compared to other transit vehicles, except taxis which show a fall in number. This is due the fact that jeep especially Tata Sumo is popular and is used as para transit vehicle (fare is based on distance per seat) for long

¹² Directorate of Economic and Statistics, Government of Maharashtra, Socio-Economic Statistical Abstract – District Aurangabad, 2011, p. 134.

distances, it usually runs on the route of railway station and bus stand and connects other places on the fringes of the city. The ban on issue of new permit has resulted in small growth in auto numbers which is 1.17 per cent for autos and 2.78 per cent for Ape. Interestingly, it should have shown no change or decline in numbers of three-wheelers. The ban on new permit also has led to selling of permit to other persons for around Rs.40,000 to 50,000 for span of five years.

4. Quality of meters should be improved. Any vehicle running on pit ridden roads would require repairs and servicing more times than those which run on even and sturdy roads. The jerks and dust have rendered many electronic meters un-functional. Thus no auto driver is happy to use it, neither ready to display the meter card.
5. In order to control corruption by government staff at RTO, agents must go, instead various fees and charges can be rationalized so clerk could be appointed for filling up forms of the prospective drivers/owners who are unable to do so.
6. It is very important that the salary structure of lower cadres of policemen and RTO officer be increased to a decent level; so that a sense of belonging and duty can be inculcated among such government officers. In this way corruption can be reduced to a great extent if not eradicated completely.

To sum up, in city of million plus and with the status of international heritage site and historical background, people of Aurangabad need what they deserved.

*The writer is working in Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics, Mumbai as an Associate professor and head of the Economics department. This brief empirical study is done in compliance with UGC rules for her ongoing

research for Ph.D. degree in Economics under the Teachers Fellowship provided by the UGC.

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